

WLBT/WJDX Radio Broadcast

Charles Evers: NAACP: 30 minute TV Spot

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ANNOUNCER: ...program is presented in response to a request from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The program will answer certain questions raised by telecasts on this station this past Tuesday night, August 10th. Speaking for the NAACP is Charles Evers.

EVERS: Thank you very much. On last two nights ago, some of our distinguished Mississippians was on this station and the other station in our city appealing to the voters of this state to ratify certain amendments to the Constitution of Mississippi. We're very disturbed, as the Negro population consists of 42 percent to 46 percent of this state, that none of us were represented. On top of that, we were not only not represented, but we were even left out altogether on the discussion with the exception of the time when we were being said that we were illiterate and would not qualify...would not be qualified to become registered electors, and that this state would only open its doors up to become saturated and ruled by ignorant people. But we could not sit idly by and let our people be insulted by not only our elected officials but by no other person in this state at this day. Therefore, we request equal time, and I want to express my appreciation to the stations for giving it to us, to express to the Negro population, and to the Whites likewise, that we are part of this state and that we have no more illiteracy in our race than there are in the White race. And that, if there is any illiteracy...and we know there is...it's not because we have asked for it. It's because we've never been given a chance to become anything else. Therefore, we have come tonight to express to you who are listening, both Black and White, and let you know that we resent being challenged or being called names, not only by ourselves, but by our White brethren. Tonight I have with me on the panel to bring to you the...our pros and con...and, first, I'd like to make clear that we are a non-partisan organization, and we're not here speaking for the amendment nor against it, but only voicing the opinion of most Negroes in this state. To my immediate right here we have Mr. Johnny Frazier, who is the vice-chairman of the Young Democrats of Mississippi. He is also a member of our national board of the NAACP, and he is, in many times, conference with the President of the United State, Lyndon Baines Johnson. To my extreme right here, we have Reverend R. L. T. Smith, who is chairman of the Jackson Movement and also vice-chairman... president of our local branch here, a businessman, a man who has been working in politics for many years, a man who had the nerve and the courage long before Negroes could even elect a constable in any county in this state, ran against one of our representatives. To my extreme...to my left here we have a man, attorney R. Jess Brown, who has defended Negroes throughout this state, even in the hills of the northern part of our state, over in the Delta, southwest part in the rural counties of Amite, Walthall, and the rest of these counties where most sane people would be afraid to even go.

Attorney Brown has gone into those courtrooms and stood up for the rights, not only for Negroes, but for people of this state. I'm honored to have these gentlemen here with me tonight to express the feeling of the Negro people, not only of this community, but we feel of this state. First, I'm going to call on a young man who has a great future, who has tried unsuccessfully three to five times to enter the Mississippi Southern University at Hattiesburg, Mr. Johnny Frazier.

FRAZIER:

Thank you very much, Mr. Evers. To the distinguished panelists, and to you, ladies and gentlemen, the TV audience. I would first like to give a few statistics in terms of how people voted and in terms of the number of persons that reside in various areas of the state, specifically the congressional districts. First of all, the first congressional district where some 364,441 citizens reside, only a little over 26,000 people voted in 1962. In the second congressional district, 608,441 people reside there now, and only 31,345 people voted in 1962. In the third congressional district, Congressman John Bell Williams, where 460,000 citizens now live, only 38,093 voted in 1962. In the fourth congressional district, where over 295,000 people live, only 26,191 people voted in 1962. I'd like to now go into the population distribution of Negroes by congressional districts which is as follows. The first congressional district, the number of Whites-247,300, Negro-117,337. The second congressional district, White-247,661, Negro-359,426. The third congressional district, White-246,527, Negro-213,290. Fourth congressional district, White-173,532, Negro-118,998. The fifth congressional district, White-342,526, Negro-106,652. Now, assuming that nearly 45 percent of the Negroes in each congressional district are of voting age, for this is what state figures indicate. When we know that in each of these congressional districts where there are more voting age Negroes than Whites who annually vote in federal elections the great fear of the White is not merely numerical superiority for Negroes outnumber Whites in only the second congressional district, but the fact that the Whites in power know that the Whites in Mississippi do not, and are not likely to, vote in significantly large numbers. This can mean only one thing. If the Negro secures his right to vote and exercise it, he will remove segregation from the area and he will remove segregation from all aspects of public life here in Mississippi and in other areas, areas where we are kept in the ditches of abject poverty, areas of life here in Mississippi that perpetuate a system which, in effect, denies full citizenship and, in turn, affects the total economy, the total economic and social and educational standard and status of the state. Moreover, he will remove segregation from every public policy, and every official now representing this kind of thinking will also be removed. Thank you, Mr. Evers.

EVERS:

Thank you [very much], Mr. Frazier. It was astounding to know that I was listening to the news this afternoon and I hear that...and we all know...that there are many Whites in Mississippi who are not registered. [Now] a few

nights ago, when the representatives of the different groups were speaking of the illiterate Negro, evidently they forgot that there are just as many illiterate Whites in this state as there are Negroes percentage-wise. And that any test that they may have will not only, if it's administered fairly, not only eliminate illiterate Negroes, but also eliminate many illiterate Whites or all illiterate Whites. But the reason why that the state of Mississippi is in the predicament it's in today or tonight is because she too long has refused to give Negroes their equal rights in this state. And, now, they're on each other, fighting each other, even threatening to even destroy each other in order to get something they think can circumvene the federal government. But now, we are here to let them know if the federal government really means to make Mississippi and the rest of this state a truly democratic country, we're going to test every segment of it. We're going to have every inch and every share that we're entitled to, and nobody, an elected politician or a potential politician, is going to deny us our rights. Mississippi, as a whole, is practically in many sections of our state, has no law enforcement officer at all. A good example is Natchez, Adams County. Law enforcement is totally broken down there. It should be put under martial law tonight. It's not safe, not only for Negroes, but not for decent Whites either in Adams County. And the poor ignorant Whites are the one who are really suffering. They don't realize that they are a victim of this. That they are being misused and abused in order for the politicians and the power structure to continue to live on a flowerbed of ease. And the only thing that they have to look forward to is to go out and try to destroy their Negro brethren. But, as soon as we get the right to vote, we're going to get rid of all of those type of politicians and all those who believe in denying one group of people their rights in this state. A man who can do a much better job on that than I and who have experienced it many more years than I, is Reverend R. L. T. Smith, who is president of our Jackson Movement. At this time, Reverend Smith, will you speak on how the Negro feel about his right to vote?

SMITH:

Thank you very much, Mr. Evers, and ladies and gentlemen of the listening audience. We certainly appreciate this opportunity to present the Negro thinking about matters that are of great concern, not only to us here in the state of Mississippi, but throughout this nation. As has been mentioned, illiteracy has been thrown in the faces of Negro citizens of Mississippi. We make no effort to deny that there is widespread illiteracy, but we will have to look at the system that has brought about this illiteracy and that is perpetuating this illiteracy right here in Hinds County and in the other 81 counties of this state. Now, we Negro citizens here in the state of Mississippi, we love Mississippi. We love the United States of America. We...we believe in the Constitution of the United States, in fact, we believe it's the greatest document that man has ever devised for his own government, for his own well-being. It's sad for us to have to admit, however, that most provisions of the Constitution of the United States have not fully applied to we Negro citizens here in this state. Just in recent years

have we had the opportunity of sending our children to the better schools, to elementary schools and high schools, and to send them to the law school, to the medical school and other skilled professions here in our state. We Negro citizens here, we want the franchise that we may help to elect men of vision, men who are not looking back to some system that has been discarded more than a hundred years ago in fury, but, somehow, has been nurtured, has been cultivated. In fact, down until just a few years ago, we want to help all of the people, White and Black, in Mississippi escape from a system that has given Mississippi the image of a state that is in the clutches of bigots and hate-peddlers. We want to help our great state and the fine people here escape from the image that makes people look on Mississippi as a great, big poor house within the union or a problem child within the union. And we want to unite forces with decent people here in our state...and we do have a lot of fine people here. We want to unite forces with you and we want to see every man, woman and well, not child, I don't mean child, but every man and woman that is 21 years of age or older and is otherwise qualified, we want to see him or her registered, and we want to see him or her go down to his voting booth on the day of election, whether it's for constable or justice of the peace or the United States and elect men who will help bring Mississippi off the bottom. We believe in Mississippi. We believe that Mississippi has a great future, and we appeal to the men who are in power now, the men who are in control of courthouses now, the men who sit in our legislature now, and the men who presume to represent us in the Congress now, to take a new look at things, to take a new look at Mississippi, to take a new look at our potential, and let's get in step with the 20th century.

EVERS:

Thank you very much, Reverend Smith. In order to clear some of the...and give you some of the factual reports on counties in our state...and there's been some question about why we shouldn't have federal registrars. Well, we feel, and I think most Negroes feel, that we need federal registrars not only in Madison County and Leflore County, we need federal registrars in all 82 counties. And the reason why we need federal registrars is because the law clearly states any state or county that has less than 50 percent of its people registered, the Attorney General of the United States has the authority to send in federal registrars. Now, I heard, also, this afternoon that there seem to have been a deal made between the Attorney General and our officials of the state of Mississippi. But we Negroes want to serve notice on the Attorney General of the United States and our elected officials here too that we are not going to sit idle by any longer have no deals made with our freedom. Now, the law says we have a right to register and we want that right. If the Attorney General told any of our officials here that he would send in a minimum of federal registrars if they would pass a law that looked like they wanted to do something, well, I want him to know this. They have had 100 years or more to pass decent laws for all of us, and they have done everything in the book and out of the book to deprive us of our rights. A typical example, I have a rostrum here and this...I want those who say

we're illiterate to listen to the figures that I have here that came direct from the Civil Service Commission. This is 1964, November first. Alcorn County. You have 1,750 Negroes, you have 61 registered. Calhoun, who's the first congressional district, Calhoun County, you have 1,767 Negroes. Not a single Negro registered. Chickasaw County, you have 3,054 Negroes. Not a single Negro registered. Clay County, you have 4,444 Negroes over 21, now this is all over 21, you have 10 Negroes registered. We go down to Noxubee County where there's 5, 172 Negroes in this county over 21. Not a single Negro registered. We go down to the second congressional district. You have Coahoma County, where there are 14,404 Negroes. You have less than 1800 Negroes registered. Bolivar County, the county which has the all-Negro town of Mound Bayou, you have 15, 939 Negroes over 21. You have less than 612 Negroes registered, and they all must be in Mound Bayou. Holmes County, Lexington. You have 8,757 Negroes over 21. You have only 41 registered. Now, there must be some schoolteachers there. There must be some businessmen somewhere who can read and write. I want those who say we're illiterate to understand this. Leflore County, Greenwood, one of the worst counties in this state. 13,567, 21 or older, we have 268 registered. That was before this, the federal [inaudible] went in. Tallahatchie County. You have 6,483. You have five Negroes registered. I can go on and on and on. Jefferson County, right here just below us. You have...where 76 percent are Negroes...you didn't have a single Negro registered in November 1, 1964. Madison County, just to our backs here, where there are 72 percent are Negroes. We have over 10,000 Negroes over 21. You had less than 300 registered. We had 500 registered, and they got smart and purged those and got rid of them. And I listened to the broadcast the other night where it said if we can pass the amendment then, when the amendment is passed, five years from now we'll be able to go back and purge our records of all the illiterates. Well, I have news for the gentleman who made that statement. Five years from now, 10 years from now, 100 years from now, ain't no going back. We're going forward, and to carry us on with that we have one of our outstanding attorneys who has said before who has fought many times. He's going to tell us more about the bills which is proposed now. Attorney Jess Brown.

BROWN:

Thank you very much. I want to say that firstly, I certainly appreciate your having invited me to serve on this panel, Mr. Evers. Number one. I have listened to the various arguments, pro and con, with respect to the proposed, that is, the amendment that is to be put before the people to vote on. Now, there's one thing as I listen to these various arguments [inaudible] and for this thing, I sort of turn the whole thing around in my mind, and the results of such I say this. With respect to the proposed amendment that is to be put before the people here to determine whether the people want or they don't want it now, this is not an issue solely for the best interests of Negroes. This is not an issue solely for the best interests of Whites. This is not an issue solely for the best interests of segregationists. This is not an issue solely for

the best interests of integrationists. This is not an issue solely for the best interests of the Jew or the Christian or whatnot. But it is for the best interests of all the people. Now, I heard a comment made with respect to some panel discussions in which one of the members of the panel stated that in going to the polls and voting for this thing, this should be considered deeply by all red-blooded Mississippians. I say the same thing that should be considered by all red-blooded Mississippians, because I am a red-blooded Mississippian. Mr. Evers is a red-blooded Mississippian. Also, Mr. Frazier, a red-blooded Mississippian. Also, Reverend Smith is a red-blooded Mississippian. So, when you talk about red-blooded Mississippians, you're talking about all of Mississippians. Because I have never seen blood that came out of the veins of anybody that was anything else other than red. And, mostly, I'm reminded of a fact that just only a few days ago, a Negro was killed in Vietnam. Prior to his having been killed, he had sent a letter to his parents living in Memphis in which he said, "It's hell here in Vietnam. This jungle is tough. I will be lucky if I get out alive." And, ironically enough, he died before the letter reached his parents at Memphis, and just the other day he was buried and placed in the ground, and the city's...the officials of the city of Memphis, many of them were there at the graveside when that body was lowered into the ground with the American flag on it. And I say this. That what the people need to do when they go to the polls, quit talking about what is for the best interests of the Negro or what is for the best interests of Whites or what is for the best interests of those who are for segregation or against segregation. But, when you go there, what is for the best interests of the people of Mississippi certainly within the framework of the Constitution. Now, I am not going to take a position for the referendum. I'm not going to take a position against it. I'm merely going to say that, when you go there, you consider these arguments both for and against it and consider it thoroughly. I say it for this reason. There are some who will tell you that a government must be composed of people who are able to vote and serve as qualified electors who are competent people, who are intelligent people, and who are able to be able to exercise the ballot in a proper manner. I agree with that. So, you consider that side. Also, there are others who say that if you pass this amendment or if you approve it...the people approve it...that what you're going to have is this. They're going to tell you that the floodgate is going to open and that you're going to allow all the illiterate people to come in. But I can say this. I'm not, as I said before, I'm not saying...I'm not for it...I'm not saying I'm for it. I'm not saying I'm against it. I'm taking no position. But I'm merely saying that in considering what constitutes one being able to, more or less, to control the government is whether or not you're going to have some type of thing or test or something where you're going to have to go in and interpret the Constitution which the Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court was going up to take the examination under the old law might fail. There must be some limit in considering this thing, and I could talk on and on and on with respect to this. But I'm going to say this. Regardless of whether the

law stays as it is with respect to voting or whether the law is moved from the face of the Constitution and this voting that's to come up with respect to this, either way the clerks are going to have to apply it equally. And, if the clerks are...and, if they don't apply it equally, they're going to make them apply it equally, and, if they make them apply it equally, not only are they going to block many Negroes, but they're, also, going to block many Whites. And, in so doing, if that be the case, then Mississippi may have less registered voters in proportion to its population than any of the other remaining 49 states. And I think you should consider it, finally, to the best interests of all the people in Mississippi and not with respect to groups and races and whatnot.

EVERS: Thank you very much, Attorney Brown. We have about two minutes left. Mr. Frazier, would you like to have a word or two.

FRAZIER: Thank you very much, Mr. Evers. I wanted to address myself specifically to the individual or individuals that stated that 400,000 illiterates...there are some 400,000 illiterates or there will be some 400,000 illiterates who cannot read or write or understand. I was surprised at the audacity of a so-called representative to make a statement of this nature because to me, the statement categorically denies change. It invokes the situation which perpetuates complacency, ignorance, and automatically suggests that the society is closed and should remain closed. Thank you.

EVERS: Thank you very much. In closing, I would just like to say that we, as a group of people...and particularly the Negroes in Mississippi have never believed in Black against White or White against Black. We're only against wrong, be it Black or White. And we will do everything in our power to make Mississippi a better state for all of us. We have no malice or no hatred in our heart against anybody. We want Mississippi to know that. But all we're asking for and all we're demanding and all we're going to settle for is an equal opportunity and the right to become [great] Mississippians, to enjoy the things that this state has to offer. We're not going to settle for anything less. And we hope that our officials will realize that, within the next two years, they will not be able to go around and stand on the stumps and be elected off the race issue. We're going to make that crystal clear. To all of those who believe in segregation and discrimination, your time is out. Time is out for hatred and bigotry. We will not tolerate it any longer. We have certainly enjoyed this and hope that our people will understand that we're going to march forward. Wherever discrimination is, we're going to blot it out, because this is not the way for America. We're going to make Mississippi one of the greatest states in this nation all together, whether they like it or not. Thank you very much.

ANNOUNCER: The preceding program was presented in response to a request by the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in reply to certain questions raised by telecasts on this station on August 10th. Speaking for the NAACP was Charles Evers.

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